



Indoor Air Quality Investigation

Synopsis:

This SOP is written for EHS Office staff, and describes the process followed and criteria used by the EHS Office (primarily Industrial Hygiene staff) for initial response, assessment, and resolution of indoor air quality (IAQ) complaints or concerns received by the office from occupants in MIT buildings and in leased buildings with MIT employees. The objective is to assure, to the greatest extent feasible in accordance with current guidelines, general adequacy of conditions for building occupants. An IAQ complaint may fall into one or both of the following basic categories:

1. A comfort concern, e.g., area is too drafty, stuffy, too hot or cold, or contains noxious odors with or w/o symptoms.
2. A concern about symptoms such as eye or upper respiratory tract irritation, lethargy, headache, and sometimes, nausea, associated with being in the building and that resolve when leaving the building.

Summary Procedure:

1. Admin refers initial IAQ complaints received via phone call or environment@mit.edu email to Industrial Hygiene Program in EHS Office.
2. Phase I: IH staff member assigned:
 - a) Returns call to learn more and make an initial assessment to determine if an immediate investigation is needed or not, who else may need to be involved, and what equipment may be needed for further investigation.
 - b) Responds, as appropriate, and begins investigation.
 - c) Interviews concerned parties. Interview checklist in Appendix A may be used.
 - d) Performs screening tests of temperature/humidity, CO₂, VOC.
 - e) Conducts walk-through survey with visual investigation for obvious problems, e.g. water damage or infiltration, e.g. floor drains, unused sinks, dirty fan coil units, new furniture, nearby construction work, activities by outdoor air intakes.
3. Phase 2, IH staff member determines next steps based on initial investigation.
 - a) Thermal comfort complaints: work order to facilities.
 - b) Visible mold: refer to Biosafety Program for appropriate follow-up, detailed in SOP 022.
 - c) Dry drain traps filled to determine if that resolves problem.
 - d) Construction activities, contact facilities project managers to develop better controls.
 - e) Significant symptoms – referral to MIT Medical.
 - f) HVAC investigation – involve facilities.
 - g) Additional testing over time with IAQ monitors for trends where no obvious problem found.
 - h) Additional air monitoring, e.g. formaldehyde for new furniture.
 - i) Particle monitoring for printer emissions or construction dust.
4. IH staff member compiles and assesses information. Appendix C of SOP: Indoor Air Quality Guidelines may be used.



5. IH staff member writes an email or memo report to appropriate parties with findings and recommendations for resolution. Copy of email should be saved in building file, department file, and IAQ file in IHP Dropbox. Note: The Incident database should also be used for documenting calls, but this is not specified in SOP.

6. IH issues air cleaners to building occupants, where appropriate, as noted in the SOP.